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ABSTRACT

A brief introductory review of the literature reveals that research on family influence in the development of political orientations in adult children is inconclusive. This study focused on highly politicized families and examines: (1) the relative influence of family emotional climate versus family political climate; and (2) the relative influence of mothers and fathers on the child's political orientations by college age. The sample consisted of 60 white families from upper middle class communities where the parents were politically visible and were known to be either liberal or conservative. Family emotional climate was measured in terms of permissiveness, warmth, conflict and interaction. Family political climate included: (1) parental dedication to causes; and (2) parental political tutoring. The analysis of these six independent family variables with parent-child political attitude congruence indicated significant association of measures of family political climate with attitude congruence for all dyads except mother-son, with father-son dyads showing the greatest association. Reasons are discussed. (TL)

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POLITICAL ATTITUDE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN POLITICALLY ACTIVE PARENTS AND COLLEGE-AGE CHILDREN: AN INQUIRY INTO FAMILY POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION*

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ABSTRACT

One parent and a college-age child were interviewed from sixty white upper-middle-class families, in which the parent was highly politically active and identified with either liberal or conservative social causes. The sample contained approximately equal numbers of mothers and fathers and sons and daughters. An analysis of dyadic political attitude agreement suggested that mothers had slightly greater influence on both daughters and sons. An analysis of the association of six independent family variables with parent-child attitude congruence indicated significant association of measures of family political climate with attitude congruence for all dyads except mother-son, with father-son dyads showing the greatest association. The reasons for the apparent discrepancies were discussed, along with the suggestion that symbolic interactionist theory provides a useful theoretical framework for political socialization research.

POLITICAL ATTITUDE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN POLITICALLY ACTIVE PARENTS AND COLLEGE-AGE CHILDREN: AN INQUIRY INTO FAMILY POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

The past decade has witnessed a burgeoning of interest and research in the area of political socialization. Although much of the impetus for this research has come from social scientists whose substantive interest is politics (Eulau, et al, 1959; Lane, 1959; Greenstein, 1960, 1965; Almond and Verba, 1963) or whose immediate concern has been student political activism (Schiff, 1964; Flacks, 1967; Keniston, 1968), political socialization research is of equal importance to social scientists whose substantive interest is the broader area of socialization and the family. Knowledge of how political attitudes and values are learned, and the role played by the family in this learning, has obvious implications for the learning of attitudes and values in other areas, and can help in the formulation of general socialization theory.

Despite the interest and research in the area, however, the role of the family in the development of political orientations of children is far from clear. It is generally agreed that the family plays an important role in the eventual development of adult political orientations,[1] but those aspects of the family which are important in influencing parent-child political congruence remain obscure.

The relationship of family affective and power dimensions with parent-child political congruence has received the greatest amount of attention. Maccoby, et al (1954), in a study of first voters in the 1952 presidential election, found that voters who as children had experienced "average" parental discipline conformed to their parents' political views to a greater degree than those who were brought up by either strict or permissive parents. Nogee

and Levin (1958), in a study of college students eligible to vote in the 1956 election failed to replicate the findings of Maccoby, et al, however. Middleton and Putney (1963) suggest a partial reconciliation between these studies, concluding from their study that college students who are estranged from their parents are likely to rebel from parental political views only when politics is salient for the parent. Jennings and Niemi (1968), in one of the few studies in which parents as well as children were interviewed, provide little support for this theory, however. Interviewing a national sample of high school seniors and their parents, they failed to find any significant relationship between parent-child closeness and political attitude congruence, nor did they find that parent-child political agreement varied significantly by type of family authority (permissive, authoritarian, etc). When the political interest of parents was held constant the picture was far from clarified. Indeed, they conclude: "The affectivity and power dimensions sometimes affect only highly politicized, sometimes the most unpoliticized, and at other times their effect is not at all dependent on the level of politicization (1968:183)."[2]

Research which has used political interest of parents as a covariant with family closeness and power relationships has been generally guided by the assumption that emotional factors are central in determining whether a child accepts his parents' political views or not. Less use has been made of family politicization as a central independent variable in political socialization research, reflecting the tendency Hyman (1959) noted earlier for researchers to focus upon the motivational factors rather than the more cognitive and perceptual factors in seeking to understand political behavior. Direct learning theory would suggest that there should be greater congruence

in political orientations for families in which politics is salient, since the number of political cues provided for the child would be greater (Dawson and Prewitt, 1969). Several studies by political scientists (Marvick and Dixon, 1961; Salisbury, 1965) indicate that political party workers tend to be recruited from families in which one or both parents were politically interested and active. This suggests that one aspect of the parents' political orientation, i.e., the tendency toward political participation, is shared by children in many cases. There is also evidence that children of politically interested parents are more likely to share their parents' political attitudes as well. McClosky and Dahlgren (1959) and Campbell, et al (1954) found that adult voters were more likely to agree with their parents' political party preference when the parents had been interested in politics. Nelson and Tallman (1969) observed the same tendency with their sample of college students, and Jennings and Niemi (1968) likewise found a slight association between the amount of political conversation in the family and parent-child agreement on political party preference with their sample of high school seniors. When they analyzed family congruence on several specific issues, however, Jennings and Niemi found no significant association with family political conversation.

When we turn from the question of the influence of the family emotional and political climate to the question of the relative impact of mother and father upon the child's political orientations, a confusing picture emerges. Several of the voting studies (Berelson, et al [1954]; Campbell, et al [1954]) indicate the husbands tend to influence their wives' political preference more than the reverse. Likewise McClosky and Dahlgren (1959) found that wives were more likely to switch to their husbands' party preference when there were inherited political differences. These findings accord with what

one would expect from the fact that in our society men tend to occupy elite occupational positions, that they are more evident in political affairs, and that politics is conventionally thought of as sex-appropriate for men (Langdon, 1969). Given the association of politics with the male role in our society, and the evidence for the predominance of the husband on family political orientation, it would appear plasuible to assume that the child would be most influenced by his father's political attitudes.

Studies of high school and college students fail to support these speculations, however. Both Maccoby, et al (1954) and Nogee and Levin (1958) found students in closer agreement with mothers than fathers in political party preference. Jennings and Niemi (1968) found with their national sample of high school seniors and their parents that parent-child congruence on several attitude items varied only slightly by parent-child dyad, with mother-daughter correlations highest. Langdon (1969), in a further analysis of the same sample, found highest party agreement for mother-daughter dyads (tau-b= .45), with mother-son and father-son and father-son and father-daughter correlations somewhat lower (.36, .34, .36 respectively). Why there should be greater mother-child political agreement when other indications are that fathers are more important in the political orientation of the family is not clear.

As this brief review of the literature indicates (cf. Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, and Langdon, 1969, for a more comprehensive review), it is an understatement to note that the research on family influence in the development of political orientations in adult children is inconclusive. In analyzing the reasons for the rather discrepant series of findings which emerged from their study, Jennings and Niemi (1968) note that parents and children can disagree on political issues because the child has rebelled against his

parents' views, as suggested by a number of researchers, but they also suggest that a number of other factors other than rebellion which can contribute to generational political differences. Among these are the possibility that discrepancies may not be recognized by either parents or offspring, because of the low salience of political matters in the family. Further, discrepancies may be due to the fact that parental political attitudes may be unstable over relatively short periods of time. Indeed, survey research (Converse, 1964; Axelrod, 1967) indicates that a vast majority of American citizens lack consistency in their political belief systems and many opinions tend to be unstable. This instability of political attitudes, along with the low salience of political attitudes, suggests that many families provide a low level of political cues for their children, in which low generational continuity in political orientations would not be surprising.

If this is the case, studies of political socialization of "average" families can contribute to our knowledge of the socialization of peripheral belief systems, and be of limited usefulness in the development of larger socialization theory. Study of families for whom politics is salient, on the other hand, can contribute to the development of socialization theory in regard to the formation of more central attitudes and values.

The present study was undertaken as part of a larger investigation of the influence of politically active and ideologically polarized parents upon the political orientations of their college-age children (Thomas, 1968). Unlike the more typical parents, for whom political matters hold low salience, these parents are likely to have provided clear and consistent political cues for their children. Any observed parent-child discrepancies are unlikely to be due to the factors suggested by Jennings and Niemi for their broader sample

of families, but rather to the child's conscious opting for alternate points of view. This sample of highly politicized families, therefore, affords an opportunity to examine the relative influence of aspects of the family emotional climate versus the family political climate, as well as the relative influence of mothers and fathers on the child's political orientations by college age.

METHOD

Sample

This study is based on a purposive sample of sixty white families selected from six upper-middle-class communities in north suburban Chicago. The sample was selected on the basis of the parents being visible in their community for political participation, and for supporting liberal or conservative causes. Half were chosen who held liberal political views, and half who held conservative views.

A pool of names of potential respondents was selected from persons whose names appeared in local newspapers during the previous three years (letters to the editor, petitions, and news stories) as supporters of liberal or conservative causes. From this pool of names selection of the sample was made with the help of several liberal and conservative informants who had lived in the community a number of years and who were themselves active in liberal or conservative causes.[3] Only those persons were contacted who were identified by a local informant as being active in political and social causes, who were known to hold ideologically polarized political views, and who had college-age children. As an internal criterion of political participation, only those families were used in which the parent was found to compare in political activity with the top ten percent of adults in a national

sample on the Woodward and Roper Political Activity Index (Woodward and Roper, 1950).

The extent of political activity of this sample of parents was quite high. Most of the parents had worked for the election of political candidates, contributed money to political campaignes, etc. Ten of the parents interviewed had themselves run for public office, mostly at the local level (school board, village trustee, etc.). A number had served as precinct captains, held office in women's auxiliaries of their political parties, as well as working for village bond issues and zoning ordinances. In addition to these activities, liberal parents were involved in a number of organizations supporting liberal causes, such as world peace and open housing; conservative parents were active in conservative causes, such as home-owners' associations (opposing open occupancy), and in opposition to "liberal" teachings in the public schools.

The age range for the sample is 41-61 years, with almost three-quarters of both groups falling within the 46-55 category. The parents are characterized by high education - none of the fathers, and only three of the mothers of families in the sample terminated formal education at the end of high school, while over half of the fathers had some post-graduate education. No family reported income under the $10-$15,000-a-year category, while over 70 percent reported family income in excess of $20,000 a year. The high status of the families in this sample is further attested by the occupations reported for the fathers. In all but two families the father was employed at the managerial or professional level or owned his own business.

The number of male and female students in the sample is almost equal, with the liberal sample containing an equal number of sons and daughters

(15 each), and the conservative sample including sixteen daughters and fourteen sons. Students ranged in age from 18 to 24 (the average age being 19), and attended forty-one different colleges and universities throughout the country. Only four students reported living at home during the previous school year, and three of these were students who had dropped out of college.

One parent and a college-age child were interviewed in each family. In the group of parents holding liberal political views, the mother was interviewed in fifteen families and the father in fifteen families; mothers were interviewed from eighteen conservative families, and fathers from twelve conservative families. The refusal rate for the whole sample was 25 percent. For the sub-samples, the refusal rate for liberal parents was 9 percent, while that for conservative parents was 37 percent.[4] In no case did the child refuse to be interviewed after his parent had agreed to take part in the study.

Procedure and Instruments

For each family the parent was contacted and interviewed first, and subsequently the college-age child was interviewed. Since this study was undertaken as an investigation of the broad area of political socialization, the interviews covered a wide range of questions concerning family child-rearing practices, present family emotional climate, as well as questions concerning political views and participation. Student interviews averaged about one and a half hours in length, while the parent interview on the average took slightly over two hours.

Coding scales for each of the variables were devised from appropriate questions on the verbatim interview protocols. Coding categories were refined until two coders achieved perfect agreement on 80 percent of the

items making up each scale, using pretest protocols for this purpose. Thereafter two coders each rated the protocols for twenty families. Differences between coders were resolved, and the protocols for the remaining families were scored by one coder.

Independent Variables

Family emotional climate. Parent and child protocols were coded for four indices of family emotional climate: permissiveness, warmth, conflict, and family interaction. These measures roughly correspond to the basic dimensions of parental discipline identified by Becker (1964). Parent and child scores for these measures correlated moderately (from .45 on the permissiveness variable to .60 for family conflict), and were combined to form a single score for each variable. The operational definition of each variable follows:

1. Permissiveness: the extent to which parents allowed the child to make his own decisions, establish his own standards, regulate his own affairs without parental control. Questions were coded which dealt with parental supervision of the child's reading when he was young, putting pressure on the child in school, and how the parents would react to several hypothetical situations (the child dropping out of college, living with a girl he was not married to, and smoking marijuana).

2. Conflict: extent and intensity of parent-child disagreement in the past two years. Scores are based on responses to structured items covering the amount of parent-child conflict in the following areas: school work, vocational plans, child's choice of friends, dating and marriage plans, and use of his spare time, and finances.

3. Warmth: this variable was measured by two seven-point bipolar scales, using a format similar to that of the "Semantic Differential," in which child and parent indicated how each thought the parent had treated the student as a child. The poles for the scales were: "warm to him--cold to him," and "with much love--with little love."

4. Family interaction: extent of contact and interaction between parent and child (irrespective of positive or negative effect). Amount of contact was measured by frequency of writing, calling, and visiting parents during the school year; extent of interaction was scored from questions of how often the child talked over problems with parents.

Family political climate. Two measures of family political climate were derived from the interview protocols. "Parental dedication to causes" was scored from the parent interview alone, while the measure of "parental political tutoring" was based on parent and child interviews (parent and child scores correlated .45). The variables were defined as follows:

1. Parental dedication to causes: extent of concern about righting wrongs, improving the world, and working for these causes. Liberal causes centered around civil rights, peace, and concern for helping the poor. Conservative parents who were cause-oriented had worked to combat liberal influences in the public schools, organized Homeowners Associations to oppose occupancy, and worked for groups such as Support your Police, etc. None of the liberal respondents claimed membership in the Communist party or related groups, though several styled themselves as "old-line-socialists." No conservative parents claimed membership in the John Birch Society, but several had served as sponsors of high school chapters of Young Americans for Freedom.

2. Parental political tutoring: the extent to which parents initiated the child into an awareness of the political realm (whether consciously or incidentally), and encouraged the child in political and social concerns. Questions on which this measure was coded included the amount of political discussion at the dinner table, whether the parent took the child to political rallies, etc.

Dependent Variable

Parents and students were presented twelve identical political attitude items, covering the areas of economic liberalism, civil liberties, and international affairs (see Table 1). Respondents were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with each item on a six-point Likert-type scale. The scales were subsequently collapsed to "agree" or "disagree" in order to determine parent-child congruence on each item. The number of items on which there was parent-child agreement were summed to form a political attitude congruence score for each family.

Findings

Table 1 indicates the percent of parent-child congruence on each of the political attitude items for each of the parent-child dyads. Although mother-daughter dyads show slightly higher congruence, and father-son dyads the lowest level of congruence, these differences are relatively slight, and do not approach statistical significance. Nor does a pattern emerge for the individual items, e.g., father-child dyads showing most influence in the area of economic liberalism or international affairs.

Insert Table 1 about here

What is most striking about Table 1 is the overall high level of parent-child agreement, ranging roughly from 60-90 percent, with an overall average of 75 percent agreement. The picture of the extent of parent-child congruence is made even more clear when product-moment correlations were calculated, using the full six-point scale. Over the twelve items the correlations ranged from the low .40's to the upper .70's, with an average correlation of .55, indicating parent-child agreement beyond what would be expected by chance.

Table 2 indicates the scores for the parent-child dyads on each of the independent variables. Mothers and fathers were significantly more permissive with sons than with daughters, and daughters showed significantly more family interaction than sons. On the warmth variable mothers scored higher with sons than did fathers. For the remainder of the independent variables there was no significant difference among the parent-child dyads.

Insert Table 2 about here

Using the parent-child political attitude congruence score as the dependent variable, a multivariate regression analysis was performed with the six family variables, as well as a univariate analysis for each of the independent variables separately. Table 3 gives the resulting correlations, along with the percent of variance accounted for by the independent variables.

Insert Table 3 about here

The most clear-cut association in Table 3 is the high correlation between father-son political agreement and the two political variables. Compared to the four affective and power variables, the measures of fathers' cause

dedication and political tutoring account for more than twice as much of the variance. Likewise for father-daughter dyads, the political variables clearly account for more of the variance than do the four affective and power variables.

The lowest of all the relationships was found for mother-son dyads, with none of the correlations reaching statistical significance. Although they fail to reach the level of statistical significance, the family emotional climate variables (principally permissiveness) are more highly associated with mother-son congruence than either of the political measures. For mothers and daughters, as well, the emotional variables approach statistical significance (especially the negative correlation with family interaction), while both of the political variables are significantly associated with mother-daughter agreement on political attitudes.

Discussion

The Impact of Family on Children's Political Attitudes

As indicated above, previous research indicates that recruits for political leadership often come from families in which parents themselves have been politically active. Those studies suggest that in politically active families there tends to be high congruence in political interest and participation. The present study further indicates that in families where the parents are politically active and ideologically polarized there is high family congruence on particular political attitudes as well.

Before the conclusion is drawn that parents have transmitted their political attitudes to their children, however, it should be remembered that high parent-child congruence in political attitudes or behavior does not necessarily prove that the family itself has been the source of such political

learning. Socializing agents outside the family could have been responsible for the actual transmission of the political orientations which parents and child hold in common. In one of the earliest studies of parent-child attitude congruence (which analyzed attitudes toward communism, war and the church), Newcomb and Svehla suggest: "Apparently only where the same institutional influences affect both parents and child...do children share the definite attitude patterns of their parents to any predictable degree (1937:202)."

For the present sample the outside influences could have been institutional, e.g., church or synagogue, political organizations, social protest groups, as well as through informal contact with family friends. The high degree of family consensus on political orientations which was found with this sample of families, plus the fact that the parents were highly polarized in their political and social ideology, suggests that parents well may have chosen family friends who shared their political convictions. In other words, the high level of parental political interest and activism could have increased the homogeneity of the socialization environment to which the children were exposed, in comparison to families for whom politics is less salient. Placed in such an environment, the children could have learned the particular political attitudes which they share with their parents from other sources rather than directly from parents.

Although the data from the present study cannot address the question of the actual process of political attitude transmission, the high level of parent-child congruence on the various political attitudes suggests that the family has had considerable impact on the child's political learning, whether directly or indirectly. Further, whether the child has learned these attitudes directly, or through some indirect process, the relationship with his

parents appears to be of importance in the final outcome of the child's political orientations. Therefore it is not inappropriate to examine the extent of students' attitude agreement with mothers and fathers, and to analyze the family correlates of such congruence.

Mothers Versus Fathers in Political Influence

Although the present sample of families is too small to draw conclusions concerning family dyadic attitude congruence, the finding that there was slightly higher agreement between mother-child dyads (Table 1) replicates the findings of several other investigators (Maccoby, et al, 1954; Nogee and Levin, 1958; Langdon, 1969). On the basis of data such as these, Langdon concluded: "Such findings suggest that traditional assumptions about male political dominance in the American family may need to be revised (1969:66)."

But this picture is considerably clouded when the correlational analyses are examined (Table 3). Although fathers and sons were found to have the lowest level of dyadic attitude congruence, fathers' dedication to causes and political tutoring correlate highly with father-son congruence. In contrast, the association of independent variables for mother-son dyads was relatively low and nonsignificant. Especially striking is the low order of correlations between the political variables and mother-son congruence. The only variable which shows any appreciable association with mother-son agreement is permissiveness, suggesting that less controlling relationships with sons might be important in enhancing mother-son congruence. But overall these findings strongly suggest that the father has been of more importance than the mother in influencing sons' political attitudes.

One possible explanation for the discrepant results found in Tables 1 and 3 could be that the father is important in the development of the son's

political attitudes, but when the father-son relationship is poor there is greater likelihood of rebellion against the fathers' attitudes. This rebellion hypothesis has been suggested by several researchers (Lane, 1959; Middleton and Putney, 1963) in the cases where parents are highly politicized. The low level of association between father-son congruence and son's conflict with parents argues against what is usually thought of as adolescent rebellion, i.e., fighting with parents over the child's growing autonomy. Indeed, the low level of correlations for all four of the emotional variables suggests that the fathers' political concern and activity far outweigh them in determining the child's political attitudes.

There is a suggestion that the affective relationship between father and son is of some importance in father-son attitude congruence, with the correlation of the warmth variable approaching statistical significance. The warmth variable accounts for more than 80 percent of the total variance which the four emotional variables together account for, indicating the low order of importance of fathers' permissiveness and the extent of the sons' conflict o‡ interaction with parents in influencing father-son attitude congruence.

An example of the type of relationship that existed between some of the sons and fathers in this sample is indicated by the response of one father to the question, "Have you tried to make your son aware of political and social issues?"

> I didn't try to train _____. I would take him with me when I went to speak (at political rallies) in Skokie or Rockford. But I did it because he was good companionship, not consciously trying to influence him. (How about discussions at dinner?) We discussed so much that my wife cautioned me that I dwelled on these sorts of

things too much. My daughter tried to make noise to get attention, because she was left out of the conversation.

Here we see implied not only political tutoring, but also an adult example of political interest in a context of effective warmth. In this particular instance the father's political participation was in the more conventional channels. In those instances where fathers were active in ideological causes (marching for civil rights, peace, etc.), the influence upon their sons' political attitudes was even more pronounced, as indicated by the slightly higher correlation for father cause dedication than for political tutoring. Such political influence appears to be especially potent when there is a warm father-son relationship, as suggested by the near-significant correlation of the warmth variable with father-son congruence.

The correlational analyses, then, indicate that the father has probably had more impact upon the child's learning of political attitudes than the mother, and that the variables associated with the father's political interest and activity are most highly associated with father-son congruence. The question then arises as to why actual parent-child congruence is not higher for father-son dyads, than for mother-son dyads, in view of the fact that none of the independent variables related to mothers correlated significantly with mother-son attitude congruence, while father's political concern and activity correlated highly with father-son attitude congruence.

A possible explanation of these findings may relate to the fact that there was a high level of agreement on political attitudes between parents in the families in this sample. For instance, in only two cases did parents prefer the opposite political party from that of their spouse. This high level of agreement (97 percent) far exceeds that reported in the several

voting studies (e.g., Campbell, et al, 1954). Such high spousal congruence is not surprising when it is remembered that these parents were chosen not only for their level of political activity, but also for their identification with ideologically-oriented causes. With spouses so highly ideologically polarized it would perhaps be surprising to find that they held opposing political views.

Given the likelihood that the parents in these families were in close agreement on political attitudes, a child's acceptance of the views of one parent would entail acceptance of the views of the other parent as well. If the father were the cause of the son's appropriation of parental political views, this would only be indicated by the level of association of the independent variables with his father, not with his mother (as was found to be the case). In other words, in accepting his father's political views, the son would be at the same time accepting his mother's views, since mothers and fathers are in such close agreement. The lack of significant difference for mother-son and father-son attitude congruence (Table 1) supports this possibility.

Whether this is in fact what has happened with the families in this sample is impossible to determine from the present cross-sectional data, and must be examined in future studies. But it does appear plausible, based upon the pattern of correlations found, and suggests that cross-sectional measures of parent-child congruence on political attitudes (as in Table 1, and the findings of other researchers, such as Langdon, 1969) may underestimate the importance of the father in his influence upon the political attitudes of his son. If it is the case, as several studies suggest (Berelson, et al, 1954; Campbell, et al, 1954) that the father to a greater extent than the

mother influences the political views of the spouse, the importance of the father in the eventual political attitudes learned by both sons and daughters would be greater still.

The influence of mothers and fathers upon daughters' political attitudes appear roughly equal, as indicated by the extent of dyadic attitude congruence and the correlational analyses. For fathers the influence appears to be primarily in the area of political concern and activity, with the father's dedication to causes significantly related to dyadic agreement. The association of fathers' political tutoring with attitude congruence is quite low for fathers and daughters. It is interesting to note that this is also the case for mothers and sons, indicating low cross-sex political turoring and high same-sex political tutoring, for the four family dyads.

Although none of the associations for the emotional variables reach statistical significance for mother-daughter dyads, the association between attitude congruence and mother-daughter interaction approaches significance ($p. < .10$), and is negative in direction. It may be that mothers who are politically active and concerned set an example of autonomy for their daughters, which leads the daughter to become less dependent upon, and consequently in less frequent contact and interaction with parents. This is, of course, only a speculation which must await verification from further research.

Langdon's warning that "traditional assumptions about male political dominance in the American family may need to be revised (1969:66)" may still be true, and further longitudinal research will probably be needed to clarify the issue. But the data from the present specialized sample suggest that such revision must carefully distinguish between parental influence on sons

and daughters in view of the greater association of family variables with attitude congruence found for same-sex parent-child dyads.

Implications for Political Socialization Theory

Hyman (1959) noted the tendency for social science research on political behavior to focus upon motivational factors to the near exclusion of the more cognitive factors in political learning. This tendency can be found in the readiness of some observers to ascribe student political activism to the child's rebellion against parents (cf. Feuer, 1969). Research on parent-child congruence in political orientations has also tended to focus upon the emotional factors in the family which influence the child's acceptance or rejection of parental political views (Lane, 1959; Middleton and Putney, 1963).

The data from this study lend but little support to these affective models of political socialization. Of all the correlations in Table 3, the only ones which show a significant association with parent-child attitude congruence are those which are indicative of the family political climate, i.e., parental dedication to causes and political tutoring. In particular there is little evidence that children tend to choose the political area for rebellion against their parents even when politics is salient for the parents.

This is not to say that family emotional climate is of no importance in influencing parent-child agreement on political issues. Several of the emotional variables approach statistical significance, as noted above. It should also be remembered that this study is based upon a sample of intact upper-middle class families. Families such as these may not provide a wide enough range in the family affective and power dimensions to affect the child's adoption or rejection of parental political views. In families

where parent-child estrangement is more pronounced, or in broken families, it could be that the emotional factors would assume even greater importance.

What is clear from this study is that for highly politicized parents the political cues within the family appear to play an important role in influencing child's political attitudes. Just as a high level of political cues in the family appear to socialize an individual toward political participation (Prewitt, 1965), such an atmosphere apparently contributes to high parent-child congruence on partisan political attitudes as well. An adequate model of political socialization must take account of the cognitive elements in the socialization process, as well as the affective factors.

Dawson and Prewitt (1969) in a recent review of theory and research on political socialization suggest the symbolic interactionist model as a useful theoretical framework for political learning. They suggest the "political self" develops much in the same way that Mead described the development of the "self":

> The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity; that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals in that process. (Mead, 1934, p. 135)

As Dawson and Prewitt note, the individual's "political views are a part of his more general social views...(W)hat the citizen feels about political life is distinct from and yet related to his religious, economic, and cultural views (1969:17)." The symbolic interactionist framework has the advantage of placing political learning within a larger theoretical framework, so that it can be viewed as a specialized instance of general socialization theory. Such

a broad theoretical framework will help to prevent political socialization from becoming a separate specialty of social scientists whose substantive interest is politics,[5] with the accompanying possibility that the area will be ignored by other researchers whose substantive interest is the broader area of socialization.

The symbolic interactionist framework has the added advantage of focusing the study of political socialization upon the total process involved in the learning of self, including both the affective and cognitive dimensions. As Hess and Torney (1967) have suggested, different political attitudes may be learned in different ways, and clearly the cognitive and affective aspects of the child's environment, both in the family and in his larger environment, must be investigated if we are to gain an understanding of the total political socialization process.

To place political socialization within the symbolic interactionist theoretical framework serves only to give a general orientation to future research in this area; it does not tell us the specific processes by which such learning takes place. We still need to know the processes by which the "self" is learned, be it political or the more inclusive self. More specifically we need to know the influence of early political learning upon later beliefs and behavior, the relative influence of the family vis-a-vis other agents of political socialization, and the relative importance of affective and cognitive factors in the learning of different levels of political attitudes. Systematic investigation of these topics will not only enlarge our understanding of political socialization, but will be of substantive import in the formulation of more general theories of socialization.

Table 1

Percent parent-child congruence on political attitudes

	Father-son (N=13)	Father-daughter (N=14)	Mother-son (N-16)	Mother-daughter (N=17)
1. Side with workers in strikes	77	86	88	88
2. Government own dams	62	71	75	76
3. Expanded Medicare	85	71	88	76
4. Socialized medicine	85	86	81	65
5. Bombing of North Vietnam	69	71	69	76
6. House Un-Am. Activities Comm.	62	86	81	82
7. U.S. participation in U.N.	85	78	69	82
8. Ronald Reagan	77	93	75	94
9. Aid to India	69	64	75	70
10. Martin Luther King	77	64	69	82
11. Civil rights protests	62	86	81	82
12. Student protests	62	71	69	76
Average Congruence	72	77	76	80

Table 2

Mean scores for parent-child dyads on the six independent variables

	Father-son (N=13)	Mother-son N=16)	Father-daughter (N=14)	Mother-daughter (N=17)
Parental dedication to causes	24.7	23.7	23.7	23.8
Parental political tutoring	34.3	33.9	33.9	34.4
Permissiveness[a]	37.1**	37.5**	31.2**	34.4**
Conflict	10.0	10.4	11.1	11.5
Warmth[b]	19.6*	22.6*	20.1	21.6
Interaction[c]	10.9**	10.9**	13.0**	12.1**

* $P < .05$ ** $P < .01$

[a] Mothers and fathers significantly less permissive with daughter than with sons.

[b] Mothers significantly higher in warmth with sons than fathers.

[c] Daughters significantly higher in interaction with parents than sons.

Table 3

Regression analysis of six family variables

upon the measure of dyadic attitude agreement

	Father-son (N=13)	Father-daughter (N=14)	Mother-son (N=16)	Mother-daughter (N=17)
	Percent of variance accounted for (correlation coefficients in parentheses)			
Two political variables:				
(parental political tutoring; parental dedication to causes)	69%** (.83)	28% (.53)	4% (.19)	22% (.47)
Four emotional variables:				
(permissiveness, conflict, warmth, and interaction)	25% (.50)	15% (.38)	29% (.54)	25% (.50)
Univariate Analysis				
Parental dedication to causes	57%** (.75)	23%* (.48)	3% (.19)	17%* (.41)
Parental political tutoring	52%** (.72)	6% (.24)	0% (.02)	18%* (.42)
Permissiveness	3% (.17)	2% (.14)	18%[a] (.42)	3% (.16)
Conflict	2% (-.13)	1% (.08)	11% (.33)	2% (-.13)
Warmth	21%[a] (.46)	0% (.04)	2% (-.14)	1% (-.11)
Interaction	1% (.08)	8% (-.28)	1% (-.11)	14%[a] (-.38)

[a] $P < .10$ * $P < .05$ ** $P < .01$

Note: Probabilities indicate correlations significantly greater than zero.

Footnotes

[1] When Hyman reviewed the literature on political socialization a decade ago, he concluded that the family is probably the foremost agent influencing the political learning of children (1959:69). Since that time several researchers have called into question the centrality of the family in the political socialization process (Almond and Verba, 1963; Hess and Torney, 1967; Jennings and Niemi, 1968). Despite this negative evidence, most of the research continues to point out the importance of the family in the development of political attitudes in children. Langdon (1969), in the only systematic comparison of the family to other agents of political socialization, found that the family accounted for roughly four times as much of the variance in explaining feelings of political efficacy in a sample of Jamaican youth, when compared to the influence of either the school or peer groups. Dawson and Prewitt, in a recent survey of the literature, conclude that the family is at least "one of the key structures through which political socialization occurs (1969:121)."

[2] One of the reasons that research on parent-child political congruence is so confusing is probably due to the fact that different researchers have tapped different levels of political attitudes. Although Jennings and Niemi examined different types of political attitudes, the major part of their analysis is based not upon partisan issues, but rather more consensual issues. For example, they use four items (1968:175) to illustrate the low level of parent-child attitude congruence. Three of these four issues (use of prayer in school, allowing an elected Communist to take office, and allowing speeches against religion) refer to what Easton (1965) has called "regime norms," whereas most

of the other studies of political socialization have concentrated upon partisan issues (cf. Easton and Hess, 1962). In an analysis of other data from the present study (Thomas, 1968), it was found that parent-child congruence varied significantly for regime-level attitudes in comparison to partisan issues.

[3] The informants included two presidents of local Human Relations Councils, a woman who did volunteer work for the Anti-Defamation League in keeping track of right-wing organizations on the North Shore, a man prominently identified with the John Birch Society, and the secretary of a conservative group, Parents for Responsible Education, which had organized its own private school.

[4] The higher refusal rate for conservative parents was apparently due to the lack of cooperation by the more ideologically polarized among this group. This was suggested by the emotional and categorical refusal to participate by a number of conservative parents, as well as by the fact that none of the conservative parents interviewed were members of the John Birch Society, although Birch cells were quite active in several of the communities from which the sample was drawn. Liberal and conservative parents in the sample did not differ significantly in the extent of political participation (as measured by the Political Activity Index).

[5] Easton and Dennis imply this, suggesting that "an approach to socialization in the political sphere dictated by theoretical interests of other disciplines need not coincide with the potential concerns of political science. At the very least we cannot assume that a conceptualization of the relevance of socialization adequate for the problems of disciplines not centrally devoted to politics will automatically satisfy the major analytic needs of political science (1969:15)."

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